

For Immediate Release

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Roanoke County Public Information Team Commended for Receiving a 2011 Silver Anvil Award: *National Honor Received for Communications in Missing Child Case*

ROANOKE COUNTY, VA (June 30, 2011) The Roanoke County Board of Supervisors at their June 28 meeting recognized the County's Public Information Office for receiving the prestigious Silver Anvil Award from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The Silver Anvil, which recognizes outstanding achievement in strategic public relations planning and implementation, was presented to Public Information Office staff during the Silver Anvil Awards Ceremony held June 9 in New York City.

The office received the 2011 Silver Anvil Award in the Crisis Communication - Government category for its entry titled "Finding Brittany: How Training and Experience Influenced the Search for an Abducted Child." The entry described the process the Public Information team used to capture and sustain the national media's attention in December 2010 after learning that a murder and child abduction had occurred. Police realized 12-year-old Brittany Smith was missing after her mother was discovered dead inside their home. Authorities feared that Brittany was abducted after the attack by her mother's boyfriend, Jeff Easley.

To find Brittany, Roanoke County Public Information staff, along with Virginia State Police and the FBI, managed a communications plan that kept the search in the national news. The plan included message development, media relations, news releases, press conferences, and social media. Five days after Brittany was discovered missing a woman who saw the story on CNN recognized Brittany panhandling outside a grocery store in California; she was with Easley. Authorities were alerted and police took Easley into custody. Brittany returned home to Virginia and Easley remains in jail awaiting trial on abduction and capital murder charges.

"As we reviewed all Silver Anvil winners to select the Best of Silver Anvil, I was truly impressed with how many of these programs 'moved the needle.' Whether it was helping a business gain market share or helping free a political prisoner in Iran, these programs all made a difference," said James J. Roop, APR, Fellow PRSA, 2011 Awards and Honors Committee chair and president of Roop & Co., Cleveland, Ohio. "The Silver Anvils continue to recognize the best practices in our field."

The Silver Anvil Awards program has grown in scope and stature since its inception in 1946, and awards are now given in 59 categories and subcategories. In the 60-plus-year history of the Silver Anvils, many organizations have been recognized, including solo practitioners, agencies of all sizes, large and small businesses, top corporations, nonprofits, associations and government agencies.

About the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)

With more than 31,000 members, [PRSA](#) is the largest organization of public relations professionals and students. PRSA is comprised of 112 local [Chapters](#) organized into 10 geographic [Districts](#); 14 [Professional Interest Sections](#) that focus on issues, trends and research relevant to specialized practice areas, such as technology, health care, financial communications, entertainment and sports, and travel tourism; and the [Public Relations Student Society of America](#) (PRSSA), which has more than 300 [Chapters](#) at colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. PRSA is headquartered in New York.

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